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# SELÉNÉ

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND  
HENRY MILLS ALDEN

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SELÉNÉ



# SELÉNÉ

## I

FROM April Latmos and the deeps of night,  
Down-faring with a mighty wind that seemed  
The breath of the wild moon, came one alone,  
Unquiet where all else was quietude.  
With skyey gait, on sandals sharp with sleet,  
Glistening she sped along, while at her heels  
Two hounds as grey as dawn leaped airily,  
Nor seemed of heavier substance formed than  
that

Of which the dawn is fashioned. On her brow  
A jewel, clear like ice and white like flame,  
In shape a crescent, burned with steady glare  
Of lustre delicate, and as she ran  
Lit up her crisp, pale profile, arrogant  
Against the dim serene of forest gloom.  
Behind her, like a saffron-coloured cloud,  
Blown backward from the new moon's slender  
horn,

## SELÉNÉ

Her tresses, by her vehement speed unloosed,  
Melted in golden mist upon the wind.  
Tall was she and of form so buoyant bright,  
Not that fair-seeming wrought of sunset clouds  
To mimic Argive Helen and to lure  
The wroth Achaians unto bitter war,  
Had skimmed more light above the stolid earth.  
A many-plaited skirt of lissom white  
Was from her shining knees up-caught and drawn  
Beneath a girdle starred with chrysoprase,  
With jacinth, and with rubies. On her breast,  
Wide-spaced and maiden-small, an armour fair  
Of crystal patines lapping scales of jade  
Dissolved with her quick breath, from white to  
grey,

From grey to white, like spangles that bestrew  
A moonlit wave, while 'gainst the nipping air,  
A silvery fawn-skin o'er her shoulders hung,  
Whereon the tiny tips of antlers gold  
Seemed crocus-buds outpeering from a fleece  
Of new-fallen snow. Her bow was in her hand,  
And ever as she leaped along the way,  
More swift of startled flight than once had been  
The sacred fawn whose pelt now covered her,  
The crystal arrows in her quiver clanged.  
Thus for an hour she fled, nor paused for breath,

## SELÉNÉ

Nor loosed her eyelids from their curve intense,  
Until, beside a pool o'erglazed with ice,  
That in the heart's core of the forest lay  
As doth a cold, dark thought in hearts of men—  
Ay, and of gods sometimes—she stopped abrupt,  
Paused, smiled unmirthful, then, with sudden  
frown,

Whereat the night took on a shadow weird,  
Drove her bright bow sheer through the skim of  
ice.

It splintered into shape of a vast star,  
And 'neath the opal-fringed float of light  
From that clear crescent melted swift away  
As though beneath the gaze of Helios.  
Anon came bubblings soft, and limpid gush  
Of music, airy, lorn, mysterious,  
Like that which fluctuates on stilly nights  
About the hollow silence of a ship  
Wherein a poet lies awake for love.  
Next rose a vapour, whorl on delicate whorl  
Uncoiling in the starry frost above,  
Until the pool, deep-sunk in greenery  
Enamelled all with glair of frozen mist,  
Was like unto a Titan's drinking-cup  
From hugest emerald scooped and hurled by Zeus,  
In wrath, from heaven. Slow those milky plumes

## SELÉNÉ

Of vapour-delicate, earthward to float,  
As from a white dove's breast the feathers torn  
By beak of eagle fierce, cloud-high in air;  
More slower still to melt, for long or they,  
Like shadows white, had stolen beyond her ken.  
The eager huntress saw a gleaming shape  
Shine through them, as a slender shaft of foam  
Shines through the curtains of the fog. Then  
chords

Of subtle harmony shrilled, and then a voice  
Only less sweet than that wherein the moon  
Sings to the listening stars—"O thou most dear,  
Long wished for and unseen for many a day,  
Wherefore now comest thou on eager feet,  
With quiver brimming and with bow unstrung?"  
Whereat the other, half as she would weep  
For anger, or for sorrow, or for both,  
Reached out her silver arms, and in a tone  
Of sweetness still more spherey exquisite,  
Exclaimed: "O Steropé! O nurse belovèd,  
Delay not in thy coming, for to thee,  
To thee alone of all created beings,  
Turn I for counsel, ay, mayhap for comfort!"

As when from tenting clouds of twilight grey  
Forth leaps the summer lightning delicate,

## SELÉNÉ

And with one scintillant stroke of her keen wand  
Transforms the further heaven into a rose  
Of golden fire, auroran, myriad-petalled,  
Whereto the stars like jewelled bees do cling,  
So at that last word "comfort" there sprang  
forth

From out the shrivelling mist a splendour swift,  
Shaped like a woman, on whose forehead glanced  
A beamy star of radiance palpitant.  
Now with a tangled skein of rainbow-light  
It meshed her brow, now in one steadfast hue,  
Like to a flower of violet crystal shone,  
Ridging her crispy hair with purple dusk  
And purpling even such heavenly stars as flashed  
Through its transparent tremble. To her limbs,  
Haughty, as of a goddess, there did cling  
A sleek, bright gown of rippled silver, strewn  
With sea-weed variegate and little shells  
Rose-pale and curlèd as the scattered leaves  
Of apple-blossoms. Such her dress. Her eyes  
Had looked on dying love and in her voice  
Thrilled low that unemotional despair  
Of one who long ago, who all alone  
His requiem had chanted. Not in vain  
That shining-footed one had called to her,  
For straightway to her breast she drew the maid

## SELÉNÉ

With murmurs inarticulate, which are  
Of love the most expressive—such soft sounds  
As brooding birds make o'er their timorous  
young,

By cry of distant hawk or owl alarmed.  
Then swiftly spake: "For comfort, sayest thou?  
For counsel? Dost thou come to me for  
these?

Ay, or to any? If so, child, wherefore?  
Nor longer hold me in this dire suspense,  
Nor with thine eyes affrayèd question me,  
But clearly speak, nor anything hold back,  
Since to their nurses, maids, though goddesses,  
Will often tell what to their mothers dear  
They do not utter." But that lovely one  
Replied not till some minutes bright had fled  
And a dark, gauzy cloud o'erveiled the moon,  
When, with quick fingers in the silver cord  
Of her relaxèd bow, she answered thus:

"Nay, dearest nurse, thou'dst speak in other  
wise

Couldst thou but even faintly dream the truth.  
Alas! Alas! How may I tell thee of it,  
Who know not yet, in very honesty,  
What to the full it means, nor why, indeed,



## SELÉNÉ

My heart so hurries, being not urged thereto  
By wrath or fear, or sight of goodly game."

But Steropé, too loving to be patient,  
Ceased not to coax her till the truth was told;  
And in this wise she told it: "Hear thou, then,  
O more than mother, hear these dizzy words  
That past thine ears will fall, as in a dream  
Fall the firm stars past eyes of mortals—hear!  
Nor eve it was, nor night, but that pale hour  
When Helios doffs his robe of wavy flame,  
And in his wingèd boat, whose dim, grey vans  
Shed over sea and land their plumage frail,  
Doth lay him down to rest. I, having stooped  
To bind the evening-star upon his mast,  
That by its light the pilot Wind might steer  
Nor drive ere dawn upon a bank of clouds,  
Took then my silver bow, and, stealing swift  
Along the sapphire ramparts of the night,  
Leaped like a falling-star to Latmos."

"Nay,  
Too much of falling-stars," sighed Steropé—  
"An omen ill in this. But tell me more."

"Thou knowest well, none better, sweetest nurse,

## SELÉNÉ

How from my birth I loved the free, wide life  
Of wood and meadow; how with kirtle shortened,  
Hair bound in mimicry of thine, and bow  
Bent from a laurel twig and strung with strands  
Of thy long, twinkling tresses, I would skim  
On eager tiptoe after butterflies,  
Speeding my tiny shafts so skilfully  
That ere I ended myriads to the stem  
Of birch and olive by those arrows pinned,  
Like unto wind-stirred blossoms there would  
flutter.

Ay, well thou knowest, how since a little maid  
I loved mine own bright freedom more than love—  
Such love as maidens dream of ere they sleep!  
Or had such lightsome thoughts disturbed my  
rest,

With arrowy laughter I had pierced them  
through,

As with my childish shafts the butterflies.  
No! mine it was to feel the larger zest,  
The nobler ache, the frenzy all divine  
Of maidenhood that knows itself a power,  
A force supreme through very loneliness!—  
Mine, mine the ecstasy of fellowship  
With winds and waves and frost, and fire itself;  
Possessing all things, yet by none possessed;

## SELÉNÉ

Serving all creatures, yet to none a slave;  
Mine to smile kindly, but with wonder deep,  
On lovers throbbing at my silver shrine;  
So lovelier far appeared to me the lives  
Diverse of those who, sharing not their souls  
Each with one other only, give to all  
Freely of what in freedom they acquire,  
Nor by such gifts aught lose, but rather gain."

She paused and with her bright hair veiled her  
face,

While once again that shadow, mystic-wan,  
As of a swift eclipse, saddened the night.  
Then came a long, long sigh, a shudder deep,  
As though some cruel thought or memory  
Her very soul upwrenchèd by the roots;  
Whereat pale Steropé: "Alas and woe!  
What hast thou done, my nursling, dearer far  
Than mine own child, had I or son or daughter—  
What hast thou done, or who to thee hath  
brought

Dismay and sorrow?" Thus again that other:

"Listen and thou shalt hear, for to the loving  
The gods their secrets tell whether of good  
Or evil, dark and wingless. Came I then

## SELÉNÉ

To Latmos all alone, for even nymphs  
Wax wearisome at times, like mortal maids,  
And with their chatter fright away high thoughts  
As sparrows drive sweet song-birds from a  
grove.

Alone I came and glad for loneliness;  
Shrill with imagined music was my breast,  
For there to give it voice I did not choose,  
Lest I should startle up some drowsy stag  
Beyond my arrows' range. But suddenly,  
Off sped my hounds across a shining lawn,  
Like shadows fleet of mated hawks that sweep  
Above a winter field in Libya.

A lovely doe it was, as lustrous fair  
As clouds that near the full orb of the moon,  
With hoofs as bright as these my sandals are.  
Swift I to follow, for with hurrying feet  
The ways that lead to woe are ever trod,  
Though afterwards we marvel at our haste."

Then Steropé's bright star did flicker down  
And leave her forehead dim, she crying out:  
"Alas! alas! for thee and me, my child,  
Since wisdom bitter-true as this thou speakest  
Not even the gods, not even thou, Seléné,  
Except through dire experience, can know."

## SELÉNÉ

Whereat the fair girl-goddess, crystal pale  
As with the presage of immortal grief,  
Faltered, but spake anon, her face still veiling:  
“Quickly I followed, quick mine arrows sped;  
I heard the chimy baying of my hounds  
Ring on the dark, like stroke of steel on  
steel,

Now low, now loud; nearer, then far away;  
And still I followed over brook and hill,  
Through wilds of matted gorse, through coverts  
deep,

Shredding my silver wimple on the boughs  
Of many a thorn-tree, leaving everywhere  
Sparkles of silver from my sandals bright.  
So keen my zest, so vehement my desire,  
So filled my veins with that ecstatic rage,  
Mysterious, of the hunter for the prey—  
Rage that is not mere cruelty, and yet  
Doth lead the mildest souls to cruel deeds.  
Yes, Artemis I was then, not Seléné,  
For many maidens in one goddess dwell.  
To Phœbos I am Phœbé, silver twin  
Of his gold godhead. Unto thee, Seléné,  
The meek, the soft, the loving; unto men,  
Ay, unto rebel Titans, Artemis,  
She of the fatal arrows—Artemis,

## SELÉNÉ

Whom it were death to anger—Artemis,  
Whom it were death to love!”

There stole a hush  
Through all the vasty hollow of the night,  
Even as though great Nature held her breath,  
Hearing from Dian’s lips inviolate  
The name of Aphrodité’s withering son.  
But she, that fearless one, shook back her hair  
With sculptural smile, disdainful, of a goddess,  
And thrust her shining bow into the gloom,  
There whirling it with movements powerful  
Of her slight wrist, until upon the darkness  
A sphere was drawn as though in diamond dust  
Streaked through with fire of ruby and of beryl.  
Then one by one her arrows to the cord  
Fitted and sped along the violet sea,  
Where bright they swam, nor did the Nereids dare  
To steal the sacred shafts of Artemis.  
So there they floated till that Eos woke  
And gathered them into her pinky kirtle,  
That she at evening time might give them back  
Unto her sister dear. Ah, had she known  
That of those deathly arrows one would pierce  
The breast of great Orion! But mighty Fate  
A darksome veil can spin o’er brighter eyes

## SELÉNÉ

Than those of Dawn; ay, o'er the sparkling feet  
Of Artemis herself could cast her web,  
Fearful, of dingy hue. And on that night  
She chose to cast it.

Steropé still trembled  
Beneath the awful name of Love, but she,  
The arrogant in chastity untempted,  
Who scorned sweet kisses, knowing not to kiss,  
And lightly took Love's mighty name in vain,  
Having yet no need to utter it in prayer—  
She, the maid-goddess, laughed like mortal maids  
Whose mood has been too serious—"Nay, fair  
nurse,"

So she began, "as solemnly I spake  
As I had been the owl of Pallas, fresh  
From gazing on a sleeping Gorgon. Nay—  
By Pallas' self!—no Gorgon 'twas I saw."

"Thou sawest?" breathed shuddering Steropé.

"Thou sawest?"

Speak, child. What sawest thou? Ai! Ai!

Great Héré!

Pitiless art thou who dost work such horrors."

"'Horrors?' sweet nurse? But listen. Once again

## SELÉNÉ

I am Seléné. Gently will I speak  
Of things most gentle. All my shafts are sped;  
Once more that nameless trouble stirs my breast,  
And what I feel I know not how to voice.  
Yet will I tell thee all, and thou to me  
My new mood shalt interpret. On I fled,  
Faster and yet more fast, till at the end,  
With my loud-breathing dogs, I ran abreast,  
When, as a white sail dives into a gulf  
Of dark ing water, out of sight the doe  
Plunged, and the hounds, osing the scent, ran  
wild,  
Their frothy muzzles dappling all the grass  
O'er which in vain dismay they circled. Next—  
Ah, Steropé, dear nurse, even to thee  
How can Seléné word what next befell?—  
I stooped, and by the jewel on my brow  
Gazed deep into that hollow where had leaped  
The magic doe, for this I truly deem her;  
How else could she have 'scaped my hounds, my  
arrows?  
Stooping, I gazed, but saw no jagged cliff  
Plumed here and there with ferns, no maw of  
stone  
With the black foam of darkness overflowing—  
Only a breeze-stirred veil of ivy-leaves



## SELÉNÉ

Glossed all with brittle dew, that in the gleam  
Down-wavering from my crescent shook abroad  
A shower of spangles azure-white and chill.  
This, with my bow, I parted, and, behold!  
An airy scoop i' th' mountain-side, whence crept  
Globe after globe of vapour luminous,  
Like spheres of dandelion-seed impelled  
By breath of lazy Titan hid within.  
At last they rolled no more, and all grew dim—  
The dimness of a crimson lily-flower  
Wherethrough the moonlight seeps, for here the  
cave

Was lined with royal-coloured porphyry,  
In hugest natural slabs up-piled. Nor long  
I hesitated but with arrow drawn  
Up to my ear-tip, dashed beneath the vine.  
Scarce twenty paces had I ta'en, when lo!  
I stood within a grotto, winter-white,  
Yet like the summer warm. All tenderest  
flowers

Netted the sparry walls, and on the floor,  
With sand more pure than powdered pearl be-  
strewn,

The fallen blooms like little shells did lay—  
Some twilight-blue, some freckled o'er with gold,  
Some whorled with milky-green and lilac dim,

## SELÉNÉ

Some faintly rosed about the silver heart,  
Some splashed with carmine, some with violet  
rimmed.

More lovely they of weird, fantastic hues  
Than thou shalt see a mermaid's changeful scales,  
And of so sweet a perfume one would think  
All fair spring days, since first the seasons reigned,  
Had wandered there to die. No light there was  
Save that my crescent shed, no sound more harsh  
Than that of water stealing as through dreams.  
Far, far without I heard the booming note  
Of my bewildered hounds, a rustling faint  
As of a dryad stealing from her tree;  
A nightingale's wild 'Itys! Itys!' Then  
No more I heard save noise of mine own heart,  
That seemed to echo 'Itys.' On I fled.  
Like moonstone now the sheeny floor appeared,  
And as I ran, another Artemis  
Pressed her fleet foot to mine and ran with me,  
Head downward in her pallid, starless heaven.  
Meseemed, O nurse, she mocked at me and smiled  
Where I smiled not, and that her crescent burned  
With passionate scarlet such as I abhor,  
And that the arrow in her bow was wrought  
With gold and gems and feathered gorgeously  
With phoenix feathers, all unlike my shafts

## SELÉNÉ

Of crystal pure from snowy falcons winged.  
But suddenly she vanished, for my veil,  
Whirled upward by a gush of air so sweet  
That from my childhood's island seemed it  
blowing,

Thrice wrapped itself about my crescent. Ah,  
What tremblings seized me then, even me,  
Seléné!—

What shudderings dire, as of a little maid,  
Mortal, and all alone in haunted dusk!  
What premonitions of dismay, what dread,  
What longing for the starry walls of heaven!  
Frantic, with aspen hands the veil I rent,  
And once again stood radiant and Diana.  
Full swift dissolved away that sparkling gloom,  
As of the emerald twilight under sea,  
Wherethrough the living phosphor wreathes and  
coils

In clouds of luminous gold-dust. Then, indeed,  
There was revealed to me a sight so lovely,  
Not Helios drowsing in his shadowy boat,  
With locks aflare, like to a joyous dream  
Upon the bosom of a dream of death—  
Not even he, quick flashed by memory  
Upon my inner sight, seemed half so fair.  
He was asleep—the sleep of little children,

## SELÉNÉ

When the faint parted mouth is like a flower  
That for the bee makes ready. Yet, by Ares!  
No softling he. The mighty muscles twitched  
Beneath the supple whiteness of his arm,  
As in his dreams, hearing my arrows click,  
He for his own great bow of yew did reach.  
'Twas taller far than I, and I am tall,  
Even for a goddess, nurse. In verity  
He looked more Phœbos than does Phœbos' self;  
As though in laughing wise he could have con-  
quered

The Python's conqueror. And yet so calm  
His earnest brow, his dreaming lips so gentle,  
Methought he was the very God of Sleep,  
And I no more Seléné, but a Dream  
Sent there to lull him into sweeter rest.  
Thus marvelling I gazed, until at last,  
As when in heaven itself come memories faint  
Of other heavens wherein divinity  
Was more divine, that unknown dreamer's face  
Grew suddenly familiar. I had known  
Those curves of lid and lip in other worlds,  
In that bright former heaven, perhaps. I  
stooped,

Then suddenly felt—was it fear I felt?  
Tell me, dear nurse.—My heart is beating now

## SELÉNÉ

At the mere memory of how it beat.  
Nor was it strange that I, although a goddess,  
Should feel in somewise moved. That face, O  
nurse,  
Was more like to mine own than is Apollo's—  
Ay, line for line, the brow, the mouth, the chin.  
The nostrils proudly stirred, as though in sleep  
He, god-like, breathed the incense of my wonder.  
Then was I shaken as by more than fear;  
But what I know not, only this I know,  
Myself's true twin lay there, and nevermore  
Can Phoebos be to Phœbé all in all."

"O miserable maid!" cried Steropé  
"Thou knowest not what thou sayest. Alas the  
day!  
Behold the doom thou didst foretell, great  
Themis!  
Alas! Alas!"

Whereat Seléné troubled:

"Why wailest thou as though at evil news?  
What doom did Themis prophesy? Speak, nurse.  
Have I a brother greater than Apollo?  
Was there a third to Zeus and Leto born?  
Is this the son that Zeus so long hath feared?"

## SELÉNÉ

Is this the stripling god whom Destiny  
Hath sent to hurl Zeus from the throne of heaven,  
Even as he Kronos hurled, who in his turn  
Dethroned Uranos? Speak. Is this the doom?  
Nay, if thou art afraid to tell on earth  
The secrets learned in heaven, I will not plague  
    thee,  
For though all heaven itself should cry him  
    mortal,  
My heart assures me that he is a god."

But Steropé: "Full many a shepherd-lass  
Hath said the same of many a shepherd-lad.  
Now tell me one thing ere thou ask me more:  
For what wast thou so troubled when at first  
Thou soughtst me here? Thy voice, thy sight,  
    thy glances  
Fearful, as of a nymph by Satyrs chased,  
Thy heart a-beat like to a nightingale's  
What time its mate is singing—what of these?  
Surely thou wast not troubled to this measure  
Because that thou, the Goddess of the Night,  
Hadst looked upon a possible god asleep!"

Then Artemis the proud hung down her head  
Before the tender mockery of her nurse,

## SELÉNÉ

As she a little, naughty maid had been,  
And, with her golden hair her crescent veiling,  
Thus answered in the small, hushed voice of shame:  
“Dear nurse, so like—so like he was to me,  
So sure I was of being his sister, nurse,  
That I—”

“On! On!” cried Steropé—”

“Alas!

If what I did was ill—I meant it well—  
But I did kiss—oh, not his lips! believe me.  
I kissed—even as Apollo kisses mine—  
His forehead and his beautiful, broad eyelids.”  
As when a wild swan from her plashy nest  
Startled doth rise on whirring wings superb  
To see the arrow-head in sunlight gleaming,  
Yet cannot think it meant to bring her harm  
Until within her breast the shaft vibrates  
And to the stars her desolate cry doth waver,  
So Steropé, and such the cry she uttered:  
“Alas, thou bitter fate! Thou fate of woman,  
Whether or goddesses or mortal maids!  
Well didst thou prophesy, O mighty Themis.  
Now do I question if thou wroughtest wisdom  
To yield great Delphos to thy pet Apollo.

## SELÉNÉ

And yet I could not think the direful day  
Would ever be 'to-day,' but in my heart,  
Whene'er I thought of it, I said 'to-morrow.'  
O me accursed beyond all other beings,  
Since helpless I must look a second time  
Upon my piteous history, enacted  
By her most dear to me of heaven or earth!"

Seléné, vexed to hear so dire lament  
O'er what to her seemed rather cause for gladness,  
Frowned, and her delicate lips, grown haughty,  
answered:

"An empty mind it shows to cry aloud  
In puny terror over great events  
Half comprehended. Speak thy meaning clearly,  
Or silence keep." Then with a sudden change  
Of voice and mood: "Forgive me, dearest nurse,  
But vex me not with shrieks and grim allusions  
To fate and woe and doom. Such methods leave  
To lesser minds. Tell thou to me the truth."

"Poor, human-hearted goddess," sighed her  
nurse,

"What truth wouldst thou that I should tell to  
thee?

All truths of divers other truths are wrought."



SELÉNĒ

"This first of all, then: Is he not my brother?"

"Nor kin he is to thee in flesh or spirit."

"Then sure a powerful god, of heaven grown  
weary?"

"Both heaven and weariness lie yet before  
him."

"How came it that he called me by my name?"

"Such things doth Moera know, and she alone."

"Why leaped my heart to hear my name thus  
spoken?"

"Most mortal maids are there more wise than  
Dian."

"What is that bitter fate, the fate of woman?"

"Thou must as women feel to know their  
fate."

"But I, a goddess, may not feel as mortals."

## SELÉNÉ

“Not even the gods can to their hearts dictate.”

“Thy words do chill my heart with sad foreboding.”

“Seléné’s heart were better chill than warm.”

“Nurse, nurse, I pray thee cease that droning  
chaunt,

As of an oracle foretelling death.

Chide me as I thy mortal nursling were,

With careless tenderness and loving spleen,

But freeze me not with cadenced utterance

Of words too cautious to be comforting.

Tell me this doom, this prophecy of Themis.

If sorrow must be borne, surely ’twere better

In knowledge than in ignorance to bear it.

And yet, O Mœra, what is it thou knowest?

Perchance, even now, thou weavest a darkling  
thread

Into the silver curtain of my life;

For though immortal, mortal dread o’ercomes me.

Steropé! Save me! Warn me not too late.

This my bright hair, which like a golden flame

Illumes the dusky cavern of the night,

For very fear hangs lustreless. Ah! Ah!

## SELÉNÉ

I feel the icy breath of Atropos  
Spread crisping through its fibres, which in horror  
Stiffen as though with frost. Was it my doom  
That Themis prophesied?"

“Yet mayst thou ’scape it!  
Yet mayst thou foil stern Héré’s vengeful ire!”  
Cried Steropé, grown eager on a sudden.  
“The time hath come to tell thee good and evil,  
That thou mayst choose between them; nor,  
indeed,  
Canst thou do otherwise, O Artemis,  
Seeing that since Chaos even the greatest gods  
Have been compelled by Moëra, the Resistless,  
To say or soon or late if they will be  
Divinely evil or divinely good.”

But Artemis, the proud, from flickering lids  
Lowered in scorn, not meekness, shot a glance  
Kin to the little, cruel, self-sure smile  
She bends upon the flying deer, and thus  
Imperious spake: “I choose to be myself;  
Or glad or sad, Artemis still in all.  
If I have chosen well or ill I know not;  
But could I change my destiny, good nurse,  
By changing aught in me that makes me Dian,

## SELÉNÉ

Merely to please the whim of other gods,  
Were that my fate more dark than night with-  
out me,  
I would remain myself."

Then Steropé,  
By fear and admiration sore beset:  
"No more, O mistress great, and child beloved—  
No more, until thou'st heard my bitter story.  
Such words of haughty challenge unto Fate  
As those thou speakest are winged with poison-  
ous feathers,  
The which grim Moëra garners up and uses  
To speed her deathly shafts unto the hearts  
From which such arrogant thoughts did issue  
forth."

"My fate is mine, not Moëra's, though she weave  
it,"

Said Cynthia, wrathful still. "Nor do I fear  
To bear what I of ill was born to bear.  
Far rather let myself fulfil myself,  
Although to gain full being I lose my godhead,  
Than live in tame abeyance unto caution,  
Speaking in whispers, lest perchance I rouse  
Some sleeping vengeance."

## SELÉNÉ

“Rightly didst thou say,”  
Replied her sorrowful nurse, “that many maids  
Dwell in one goddess, for in no respect  
Art thou the faltering, fluttering, timorous girl  
Who sought me here to-night. Why should I  
speak?

As well endeavour to direct the course  
Of one of those thy shafts, were’t on its way,  
As counsel thee in this thy present mood.  
Yet listen, for the mightiest may learn  
From the misfortunes of the humblest.”

“Speak,”  
Said Phœbé, “and remember that to thee  
My heart is ever soft, though hard my mood.”

“Come, then, my child,” that sad one answered,  
“there  
Beside me stretch thy lovely limbs in rest,  
For none too short this piteous history.”

Seléné being lain along the grass,  
As fair as foam along a dark-green wave,  
Her nurse, with drooping head on arm dejected,  
In this wise spake: “Full often hast thou heard,  
O Artemis, since first thy mother placed thee,

## SELÉNÉ

A little maid, between my childless breasts,  
Of those so dreadful woes wherewith great Héré  
Did torture her for having won that love  
Which she, though Queen of Heaven, could  
never win

From Heaven's King. Thou knowest these things  
of old,

And how wise Themis, she who first was Queen  
Of Zeus and Heaven, did feed both thee and  
Phœbos

Upon that sacred food whereby divinity  
Remains divine; but what I now relate  
Is not to any known in heaven or earth  
Save to thy mother Leto, me, who tell thee,  
And Themis, her from whom we first did hear it.  
Thus it befell: Thy mother on the day  
That Themis to Olympos did return,  
Talked long with her of what the future held  
For ye, her heaven-sprung children. Now  
'twas clear,

So Leto oft assured me, that the goddess,  
From the beginning, loved thy brother more  
Than thee she loved, he being male, and Themis  
More god than goddess as to mental sex.  
For him she prophesied but good; for thee,  
Possible evil, which, however, thou,

## SELÉNÉ

None other, mightst avert if warned in season  
By one upon whose truth thou couldst rely.  
I will repeat the baleful oracle,  
The last she spake from Delphos. Thus it ran:  
'If that she be the enemy of Love,  
Sorrow shall fall on her—ay, mortal grief.  
If Love become her enemy, more sure  
The fatal pain. If friend she be to Love,  
Still woe on woe. If Love her friend become,  
Woe, ever woe. Nor enmity nor friendship  
Should there exist 'twixt Aphrodité's son  
And Leto's daughter, if she would maintain  
An immortality of delicate bliss,  
Of rapture subtle and of perfect beauty.'  
Thus Themis; nor for all her bitter tears  
And pleadings desperate could thy mother dear  
Win from her aught of more explicit nature.  
But I, who am in such lore deeper skilled  
Than yet thou dreamest, through many a day  
and night,  
Through many a winter dark and summer  
flaming,  
Did pauseless search the solemn universe,  
Till somewhat I had solved the mystery  
Of those portentous words, so doubly veiled  
In craft of priestess and of woman-god.

## SELÉNÉ

And thus I learned that Héré, many-minded  
And crafty in proportion to her power,  
Had for thy ruin a subtle scheme devised  
To lure thee from thy joyous chastity  
Into the sombre labyrinth of passion,  
Where sorrow doth more sorrowful become,  
Sweet things more seeming sweet, but bitterer,  
Beauty indeed more beautiful, yet shorn  
Of all its consolation, and the sound  
Of lovely music, erstwhile so enchanting,  
An anguish to the soul, nor less an anguish  
For being desired; so terrible is Love  
That he can force the captive spirit to yearn  
For what aforetime it abhorred, to loathe  
What once, above all else, it did desire."

"And didst thou learn the means whereby she  
purposed  
To work my woe?" asked Phœbé, quiet-voiced,  
As are the strong when wroth to danger.

"Ay,

It was for that I spake," said Steropé.  
"I learned, O Artemis, that to thy doom  
Thou wouldst be drawn by love of one, a mortal,  
Whom thou wouldst find fast-sleeping in a cave



## SELÉNĒ

Upon Mount Latmos. Judge, I pray thee, now,  
If empty fear I showed, or causeless grief,  
When I bewailed what thou to-night didst tell  
me?"

But often they who look for sighs to rend  
The breasts of mighty ones by Fate o'erta'en  
Are sore amazed when from those lips, un-  
blanching,

The dauntless laughter rings. So Steropé,  
When Phœbé, to her fullest splendour leaping,  
Laughed, and a second time laughed vengefully,  
And yet a third time laughed with scorn superb.  
"Thinkest thou," she said, "that Zeus-born  
Artemis

Feareth the loveless wife of Zeus? That I,  
Whom Love may not approach unless I bid him,  
Have aught to fear from Love? As for thy tale,  
Poor nurse, they have deceived thee. Surely I,  
Who am a goddess, could not for a god  
Mistake a mortal man, though he were fairer  
Than Phrygian Ganymede."

"O hapless Phœbé,  
Be warned, be warned in time, as thou desiredst."  
Thus Steropé, with love and terror desperate;

## SELÉNÉ

"Thy very fearlessness doth make me fearful.  
So was it that I felt and thought and spake  
Ere awful Love did work my utter ruin."

Then Phœbé, startled: "What didst say, good  
nurse?

Thy ruin? What ruin? Thou'rt dreaming, art  
thou not?—

What ruin?"

But Steropé, with smile majestic  
Of calm despair long known, moved back a  
pace

And said: "This shame also hath Fate appointed;  
This hour, too, must I pass and live thereafter.  
Knowest thou me who I am, O Queen of Chaste-  
ness?"

"Surely, sweet nurse, I know thee," said the  
goddess.

"Alas! doth madness seize thee?"

"Nay, great Dian,  
Thou knowest my name, my face, my voice, my  
love,

But me thou dost not know."

## SELÉNÉ

“Who art thou, then?”

“I am that hapless one who out of heaven,  
The home of Love, by Love himself was hurled,  
Because I scorned his power, as thou dost  
scorn it.

A broken string I am upon the lyre  
Celestial, a lovely song unfinished,  
A fallen star. Alas, what wilt thou say?  
I am that seventh Pleiad who was lost,  
Who from her silver footstool near thy throne  
Was cast to earth, because like thee, O Phœbé,  
She did defy great Aphrodité's son.”

“Art thou that Steropé?”

“Thou knowest it now.”

“Art thou in truth the vanished Pleiad?”

“Ay,  
Truth have I told thee, Artemis—no fable.”

“But she, that luckless one, did love a mortal?”

“And I a mortal loved and love, Seléné.”

## SELÉNÉ

“But Steropé the Pleiad, how may I,  
Goddess of Chastity, her error name?  
She more than loved—she let herself be loved—  
Ay, as a bride she gave herself to him—  
That mortal who destroyed her.”

“Truth thou speakest—  
All this I did—I, Steropé the Pleiad.”

Then Artemis, by sovereign instinct urged,  
Caught up her bow, and with keen fingers  
searched

Her empty quiver, while that Steropé  
Stood smiling that sad smile of one who knows  
How little doth a breaking heart avail  
In this sad world where hearts break every day,  
Nor by the careless gods are more regarded  
Than is a shattered dove's egg, though it be  
The sole one in the nest. But suddenly,  
As when a cloud makes tender the bright moon,  
Sorrow o'ercame her, and familiar love  
And pity infinite; whereat she turned,  
Casting her fateful bow upon the ground,  
And to her bosom drew that lovely star,  
More fair, though fallen, than many a thronèd  
sphere—

## SELÉNÉ

“Whate’er thou didst thou didst ere I was  
born.”

Thus Phœbé, in divinity still young,  
And not as yet the enemy of Love,  
Though not his friend: “Sweet, hapless Steropé!  
Dark, dark the veil that Eros must have  
spread

Before thine eyes, to make thee risk thy place  
In that divinest choir for mortal love.  
Tell me, poor, sorrowful one, how did it chance  
That thou unto a mortal gavest thy love?”

“Ah, Phœbé, mortal seemed he not to me.  
A god I thought him, even as thou thinkest  
Endymion—”

“‘Endymion?’ Is it his name?  
A fairer name, at least, no god doth own.  
Divine his name, though he be mortal, nurse.”

“And mortal thy self - will, though thou’rt a  
goddess.

Ah me, dear child! This did thy mother fear,  
By Themis warned. For this did she beseech  
me—

## SELÉNÉ

Even me, unfortunate and fallen, fallen  
Lower than star e'er fell—to be thy nurse,  
That with the story of my wretched fate  
I might from Héré's malice succour thee.  
Alas! Seléné, wilt thou not be warned?  
Think of my fate — nay, more, think of thy  
mother's.

If she, for love of Zeus, the mightiest god,  
Such woe endured, how mayst thou 'scape disaster

If thou unto a mortal give thy love?  
Ay, great the error thou hast wrought already,  
Kissing the brow and eyelids of this stranger;  
For nimble-fingered Slander of one kiss  
Can make a hundred, and to spouseless maids  
Create unwished-for children of a shadow.  
Behold the one respect wherein divinity  
Less freedom hath than bound mortality.  
Unto the least its every act lies bare.  
Mistress thou art of all but privacy—  
The great can have no secrets. Soon or late  
Mankind must know the inner life of gods.  
Be warned. Be warned, O thou beloved one!  
Thou art the child of Zeus, but Zeus himself  
Could not the Delphian Oracle defy  
And be as much a god as he hath been."

## SELÉNÉ

Whereat the goddess, serious, bent her brows,  
And her cool, maiden majesty resumed:  
“Woful, indeed, must Love have been to thee,  
That thou of Love dost speak so wofully.  
Tell me, didst thou e’er meet him face to face?”

“Nay, few in heaven or earth,” said Steropé,  
“Have looked on Love. Invisible he comes,  
With radiance mystic, oftener felt than seen.”

“Mystic thy words, good nurse, but lo! I speak  
Clearly that thou mayst clearly comprehend.  
I, Artemis, to-night will look on Love  
With eyes unwavering and with heart un-  
scorched.”

Whereat poor Steropé, her hands uplifting,  
No more with Dian pleaded, but to Zeus  
Her piteous prayer did make: “Alas! thou  
great one,  
Wilt thou thy child and Leto’s thus abandon  
To Héré’s wrath? O Zeus, father of all things,  
Be not to thine own daughter less than father!”

“And shall these eyes, which daily gaze on  
Phœbos,

## SELÉNÉ

Fear to behold the glory of a lesser,  
Not even his son?"

"Thou knowest not what thou speakest.—  
None is more great than Love, not even Moëra.  
His glory could make pale Apollo's glory,  
As doth Apollo's thine."

"O impious one!"  
Cried Phœbé, at this saying wroth again.  
"Dost thou not fear Apollo's mighty ire,  
That of his glory thus thou falsely pratest?  
Even Zeus, in lightning clad, is not more glorious  
Than is Apollo when in fullest splendour."

"Alas!" replied her nurse, "whom Love hath  
scourged  
Fears not the wrath of any other god,  
For of despair and pain the worst is known.  
But Eros can make bright the halls of Hades,  
Which thing nor Zeus nor Phœbos can accomplish."

"Thinkest thou that I, Seléné, child of Zeus  
And Phœbos' sister, will such tales believe



## SELÉNĒ

On hearsay? No! This very night I purpose  
To look on Eros in full panoply,  
As when before my father Zeus he fares."

"O arrogant goddess!" then cried Steropé;  
"In this thy foolish act all men will see  
That thou by birth art only half divine.  
No god so brave but that he feareth Love;  
Nor do I dread thy wrath, who on my breast  
Cradled thy haughty head, who taught thy lips  
The name of Zeus to murmur, who, indeed,  
Showed thee to aim thy shafts unerringly.  
Send one to search my bosom; 'twill but find  
A heart more true to thee than is thine own  
When it doth urge thee onward to such deeds."

But Phœbé, unappeased: "Well is it for thee,  
Thee ready with advice unto thy betters,  
Thee crazed with exile from thy native heaven,  
Thee star that like a glowworm now must creep  
Upon the dusky bosom of the earth,  
Who once wert brightest of that brightest Seven—  
Well is it for thee that thou my love didst win  
Ere rousing thus my wrath. As for thy counsel,  
Thou hast but hastened what thou wouldst pre-  
vent;

## SELÉNÉ

For ere the sigh which swells thy timorous breast  
Can mingle with the night, I, Artemis,  
Will be upon my way to summon him,  
This so tremendous god from high Olympos,  
That, radiance unto radiance, we may talk  
Of Themis and her mighty prophecy."

Thus Artemis, defiant of great Love,  
Who, on Olympos hearing her, did smile  
A sweet, frore smile, unlike what men imagine  
The lips of Love to wear, then spreaded slow  
The tranquil splendour of his golden wings,  
And in relaxèd loveliness stood leaning  
Upon the starry battlements of heaven  
Till Phœbé's words should summon him to earth.

## II

Meanwhile Endymion, smiling in his sleep,  
Dreamed for himself another destiny,  
In all unlike the one that drew anear  
On silver-sandalled feet; for thus the gods  
Tenderly mock the ignorance of man,  
Who often, while the fair, gold fruit of joy  
So near him hangs that on his eager brow

## SELÉNÉ

He feels the mystic stirring of its leaves,  
Within the darksome earth will delve and toil,  
Seeking that other gold, whose mightiest bulk  
Is not so precious as one little seed  
Of that which hangs above him.

Yea, he dreamed,

This Carian prince (while love the loveliest  
Toward him, careless both of love and fate,  
Rushed like a thought to meet a poet's wish).  
Endymion dreamed of freedom and a life  
Wherein no more, oh, nevermore, should love  
Be even so much as named. For he had known  
The sapping, slow, brain-sucking misery  
That falls upon the passionate whom error  
Unto the passionless hath bound. Full well,  
Ah, bitter well, he knew the dregs that lie  
Within the cup of tepid tenderness:  
The faint, dread taste of kisses laid on lips  
That crave a love they never may inspire;  
The gall of words that kindness prompts and truth  
Doth force again into the struggling throat;  
The weary ache of eyes unsatisfied  
That in imagination shape anew  
The face wherewith they long to be enamoured;  
The silences that part what they should weld,

## SELÉNÉ

As when a breeze doth scatter north and south  
The petals of the flower it would caress,  
Nor bends the rose upon the rose beneath;  
The wingless hours that o'er the waste of time,  
Like slow, grey serpents o'er a desert grey,  
Creep toward the greyness of a same to-morrow;  
The jests which summon tears, the earnest words  
Which call forth merriment; the joy of one  
Which to the other is a cause for grief,  
The bondage which to one seems liberty,  
The freedom which the other counts as blame;  
The endless striving to unmake ourselves  
Because one loves us for the thing we are not  
Nor ever shall be—effort barren, senseless,  
Resulting in the death, not of our faults,  
But of the life within us, till we grow  
Into a dull, meek, apathetic being,  
Incapable of love or hate or joy,  
Incapable of mourning overmuch  
Our own incapability. These, these  
The dregs that lie within that oft-praised cup,  
And these Endymion so long had drained  
That life's keen nectar seemed to him a draught  
As tasteless as the wine we drink in dreams.  
But there had come a day, that wondrous day  
Which in all lives is consecrate to Moëra—

## SELÉNÉ

The day of crisis, when we nevermore  
May be as we have been or are; the day  
On which, the past being sealed, the future  
    opened,  
A man re-entereth the womb of time,  
And turns once more, new-born, to face his fate.

Who knoweth not that ecstasy of the soul  
Which hath been bound and once again is  
    free,  
Knoweth not the keenest joy that visits man.  
To worship Freedom as she should be worshipped,  
One must have been a slave. Thus, all exultant,  
Endymion from the palace gates fared forth,  
Careless what way he followed, since all ways  
Now led to liberty. And once again  
Nature unveiled for him her awful beauty,  
And her deep, voiceless message to his heart  
Declared its manifold meaning as of yore,  
In that delirious time of dreaming boyhood,  
Or yet mistaken vows had numbed his soul  
As 'twere with fetters wrought of ice and iron  
By some dark spell. Yea, once again the earth  
Drew him with sheer delight of loveliness,  
Until the God that sleeps in all great natures  
Awoke and cried him to himself immortal.

## SELÉNÉ

Once more the mountains claimed him, and  
the bay,

His own fair bay of Latmos, sang to him  
With voice as of a myriad sirens: "Come,  
Come, come Endymion! No woman's breast  
So lovely as my sun-warmed waves! No brow  
Of woman whiter than my moonlit foam!  
Nor in the arms of woman shalt thou find  
Such free delight as in my cool embrace!"

The starlight thrilled him like a rain of fire;  
The Dawn her magic web of delicate flame  
Cast over him, till, as of old, he felt  
Her sweet enchantment through his veins dis-  
solve.

The Wind, in language whose all-stirring fierce-  
ness

He had forgot in days of apathy,  
Now to his spirit shouted hymns of peril  
Dearer than love's most lulling melodies.

All things in earth and air, by that vast  
law

Which bindeth like to like, became as one  
With his free spirit, and as comrades dear,  
Playmates divine, most holy influences—  
Which from the tangled skein of self un-  
wound

## SELÉNÉ

The golden thread of spiritual ecstasy—  
He hailed them, and adored them, and was  
happy.

But most of all, there grew on him a passion,  
Vague, tremulous, yet intense, as of a priest  
Who hath created for his sole adoring  
Some fair religion all too exquisite  
To share with others—there did well in him  
A silent passion for the far, fair moon.  
In every varying phase he worshipped her:  
Or splendid, as in robes of frozen flame;  
Or softly luminous, like a pearl reflecting  
The damask of the rose wherein it lies;  
Or veiled in windy mist, or in a stole  
Of iridescent loveliness; or lonely  
Save for her one dear star that never leaves her;  
Or by her train of golden nymphs attended:  
In all her moods he found her all divine,  
Perfect; by night a glory, and by day—  
When like a silver ghost she lay asleep  
Upon the violet mantle of the Sun—  
Fair as a dream of some belovèd face.

Thus worshipping, he slept, and in his sleep,  
Impelled by adoration, seemed to rise  
And mount the windy stairway of the stars.

## SELÉNÉ

### III

But now the wilful goddess, all elate  
At thought of daring whom all others feared,  
Outsped her smoking hounds, and, like a gleam  
That on the arrowy foam of cataracts  
Down flashes to the valley, from the crest  
Of Latmos darted to the craggy shore.  
The tide was at its full, and round her feet  
Hissed the soft overflow of fleecy pools  
Whereon the spray dissolved—nor green nor blue  
Nor violet the ever-varying sea,  
But tinct with all, as were Seléné's eyes,  
And glossed with pearly gold like to her tresses.  
Swift ran the dappled waves with hollow swirl  
And sluicy, crashing din of backward surge  
Among the pebbles, and the desolate strand  
One long-drawn, fluctuant, sobbing roar gave  
forth

Like to the wail by Polyphemos uttered  
When sea-bright Galatea came not back.  
Near by, a rock of iron-purple hue,  
Rugged, immense, shaped like a galley's prow,  
From out the silverish gurge its beak upreared,  
Parting the spray, that as it backward fell



## SELÉNÉ

Shattered the surface of the sleek, green waves  
Till they seemed grey with hail. Upon this  
crag

Seléné sprang, and, her right arm uplifting,  
The mighty god of love did thus invoke:

“Eros! Where’er thou art, whatever doing:  
Strollest thou on bright Olympus, smooth of wing  
As are thy mother’s doves what time she sleepeth;  
Or on the air of earth dost thou unfurl  
Thy glowing plumes, or through the halls of  
Death

On stilly pinions floatest, like a cloud  
That with the sunset splendour yet transfused  
Glimmers beneath the murky dome of night;  
Smilest thou beside a prince’s ivory couch,  
Or near a bed of pine-boughs, sweet with dew,  
Dost watch the artless toying of some wood-  
nymph

Who, in her shepherd’s sunburnt arms enlaced,  
Shines silver-white as foam through sea-weed  
brown;

Or wroth, or pleased, or sad for very gladness,  
I do invoke thee straightway to descend  
In full magnificence, as doth befit  
A deity on deity attendant.”

## SELÉNÉ

She ceased, and for an instant brief as that  
Wherein the towered wave its crest suspends  
Ere plunging in the glaucous scoop below,  
No sign of godhead fired the placid sky;  
Then suddenly beamed forth a slender brilliance  
As 'twere a sunray through the hair of Night,  
Lighting her dusky brow; and even Dian,  
The ever-daring, ever-unappalled,  
Felt her proud heart wince in her dauntless  
breast

At this so prompt response unto her prayer,  
Defiant of the Delphian Oracle,  
Never, by gods or men, till now defied.  
Next there did shine, what unto mortal eyes  
Had seemed a star-white swan, with gilded  
pinions,

But which Seléné saw to be a boat  
Of thinnest ivory, winged with golden wings,  
Wherein the god stood upright, veiled soft  
In the warm aura of his loveliness.  
Deep and yet delicate the orange haze  
Shed from his scattered hair. His own bright  
wings

Were lightly shut, nor did he guide his boat  
Aerial, of grain so fragile fair  
That with his radiance from within it glowed

## SELÉNÉ

Like to an alabaster vase wherethrough  
A rose-gold flame doth glimmer. Slope it came,  
As though by subtle instinct thus impelled,  
Straight to the rock whereon was poised Diana,  
Its luminous keel shearing the curdled clouds  
That ever froth and melt like noiseless foam  
Upon the silent ocean of the air;  
Its vans crisp rustling, even as autumn leaves,  
Made gold by frost, on frosty breezes rustle;  
Its wreaths of small, red roses sweeping out  
Against the glittering pallor of the waves,  
While ever softly showered the petals fine,  
In crimson spray about the gleaming prow.

As when upon a sultry day in June  
The clouds, like smouldering mounds of silver  
fire

Along the incandescent azure float,  
And o'er the burnished, many-coloured deep  
(Of iridescence darkly beautiful  
As are the necks of black Dodonian doves  
Glinting in sunlight), send their wavering sheen,  
Milk-fair and temperate like to mid-day moons,  
Even so the bark of Eros poured its lustre  
Along the furrows of the darkling sea,  
While from its scintillant vans the rayèd blaze

## SELÉNÉ

Lighted the shallows, till that one might note  
The copper-tinted sea-weed undulate  
Beneath the lucent beryl, like to tresses  
Of sleeping Nereids, and the pebbles smooth,  
O'erspread with golden network, tremulous,  
Which, up-reflecting, meshed the bark itself  
And all the lustrous body of the god  
As though in flickering skeins of woven fire.  
A crown of jonquils intertwined with stars  
Rested above his dark and tender brows,  
Wherein was gathered all the mystic gloom  
That haunts the far, faint level of the sea.  
Yearning his eyes, as of a soul bereft  
Beyond what unto mortals or immortals  
Is of bereavement known, yet on his lips  
That listless smile, more deadly sweet and cold  
Than frozen honey culled from poisonous flowers,  
Still palely wavered. From one indolent hand  
There hung a torch of mother-pearl, whose flames,  
Lilac and topaz-white and violet azure,  
Clustered in petal-wise about the centre,  
Till like a clear-blue lotus-flower they seemed;  
Nor robe nor mantle wore he, being clad  
In his own splendour as in golden gauze,  
Wherethrough his languid limbs gleamed silverly,  
Veilèd yet hidden not. Dian, beholding,

## SELÉNÉ

Felt awe as of a mortal when in sleep  
A dream in likeness of a god approaches,  
And then grew wroth to feel herself inspired  
By Love with reverence. He, though well aware  
In what proud humour she awaited him,  
Smiled ever, calm as Death's own thoughts of  
death;

And, while the bark sank lower, spread his wings  
Empyreal, which upbore him as a star  
Is buoyed upon a wreath of gorgeous mist  
What time the sun burns saffron in the west,  
And thus, with naked beauty richlier clad  
Than Zeus himself when in his robes of state  
He takes the throne of heaven and wields its  
thunder,

Unto the angry goddess drew anear.  
Then unto him in scornfulwise she spake,  
Although her heart was trembling: "Art thou  
Eros,

Who in this guise my invocation answerest?  
And knowest thou not, O son of Aphrodité,  
That he who Phœbé angers hath to deal  
With Phœbos also? I did summon thee  
To come before me in full panoply  
As when before my father Zeus thou farest,  
And thou dost venture in my presence thus.

## SELÉNÉ

A godlike deed, in truth, and one by gods  
Long, long to be remembered!"

Whereon Love,  
In that soft voice which masters even Death,  
Thus gently answered: "Be not wroth, Seléné;  
Even thus before thy father Zeus I fare,  
Nor have I fuller panoply than this,  
For Love unarmed is then most fully armed.  
Behold me even as thou didst summon me,  
And deign to tell me wherefore I am summoned."

"Nathless right well thou knowest it ere I tell  
thee."

Thus Artemis, still haughty as to brow,  
Though in her heart she wondered that so soon  
Her mighty wrath should falter, little deeming  
That wrath may not abide when love hath spoken.  
"There are who call thee mightiest in Olympos.  
If this be truth, why dost thou question me?"

Then Love, with subtle mirth about his eyelids,  
While grave remained his eyes: "O thou most  
lovely

Yet most unloving one, what cause have I  
To search the lives to Anteros dedicate?

## SELÉNÉ

Enough of care is mine, although a god,  
Guiding the ways of those who worship me;  
Nor may I long remain with thee, who art,  
Even more than Anteros, mine enemy."

"Nay, not thine enemy!" cried eager Dian,  
"Nor friend nor foe of thine, O Eros! Hear,  
If so be thou hast not already heard,  
That prophecy, the last by Themis spoken."  
Whereon she told him all the piteous tale  
By Steropé that night to her confided.  
And, in conclusion: "Thou art now aware  
For what I did invoke thee, mighty son  
Of golden Aphrodité; let us swear,  
As though in presence of the assembled gods,  
That from this hour Eros and Artemis  
Will be nor friends nor enemies."

But Eros,  
Gentle alike in difference and agreement,  
As are the truly great, being sure of greatness,  
Made a slow sideward motion of his head,  
Uplit by many a curl more yellow bright  
Than daffodils in windy sunlight nodding,  
And thus replied: "That may not be, O god-  
dess,

## SELÉNÉ

For who hath once beheld me, from that hour  
Becomes my enemy or else my friend."

"Nay, Eros, I am neither, nor would be so."

"Thou dost not tell a wilful falsehood, Dian."

"How! Meanest thou that I have lied to thee?"

"Ask of thy heart if it doth feel indifference."

"If I speak falsely, then my heart will, too."

"Swear by thy silver bow that thou dost hate me."

"I hate thee not, O son of Aphrodité,  
Nor would I have thy hatred. Better even  
Thy friendship than thine enmity."

"Yet, Dian,  
Those whom I dearest love I wound the sorest."

Then loud laughed Artemis her mocking laugh,  
While her wide brow grew dark as moonless caves  
Wherethrough the clangorous tide thunders  
unseen,



## SELÉNÉ

And thus to that forbearing one she spake:

“Nay, thou presumptuous godling, well thou  
knowest

That 'gainst thy pretty shafts my breast is  
proof.

I fear thee not, O Love—I fear thee not.

What! Dost thou take me for another Pleiad?—

A trembling star? I, who am Queen of Night?—

Empress of Chastity? Thou pratest to me—

Me, Artemis!—of what thy darts can do?

O little god, how wouldst thou fare if I

One of my deathly arrows loosed at thee?

Thou baby deity! thou pet of heaven!

Thou youngest god, alike in thought and being,

Since thou dost seek to fright the Huntress

Queen

With talk of darts!” She paused to laugh again;

But even in wrath is Eros ever gentle,

And thus with courtesy divine made answer:

“Truth hast thou said, Seléné, though but half.

Youngest of gods I am, yet only Chaos

Of all the gods is older. Thou dost call me

The son of Aphrodité, yet I walked

In might and power along the wayless sea

Ere the glad wave, which by its death gave birth

## SELÉNĒ

To Cytherea, burst in opal foam  
Among the foam-fair blossoms of Cythera.  
When thy bright moon was lonely and the sun  
Uncharioted, I, Eros, from that heaven  
Whereunder heaven's own heaven is wanly  
spread

As 'twere a floor of agate sifted o'er  
With dust of topaz, looked into the future,  
Deep pondering, when on a sudden, lo!  
My inmost thoughts did visible become,  
And there was light and life. Thus much I tell  
thee,

O Artemis, that not in ignorance  
Thou mayst defy me, who of all the gods  
Am most inevitably that I am."

Again felt Artemis unwonted awe,  
And fate's cold breath seemed tingling through  
her hair,  
But still her arrogant pose of mind and body  
She, obstinate one, maintained, thus answer-  
ing:

"Easy as darts are wingèd words to speed,  
And even as little do I fear them, Eros;  
Nor can I bring to light thy hidden meaning,  
For surely thou dost speak in parables."

## SELÉNÉ

"To that which I do speak, O Artemis,  
'Twere best thou hearken both with mind and  
body."

And though his lips still smiled his brow was  
stern.

"Themis hath warned thee by that oracle  
Which she most justly thought thou wouldst  
revere;

Thy hapless mother through thy hapless nurse  
A second time hath warned thee; and to-night  
I, Eros—he 'gainst whom thou wast so cautioned—  
A third time cry 'Beware!' Nay, I remind thee  
In no wise tauntingly, but all in kindness,  
That by descent thou'rt only half divine,  
And that through me thou camest into being.  
Nor speak, O Dian, till that I have finished,  
Lest haply thou shouldst add more bitterness  
Unto that cup which Mœra now is mixing,  
And which thou, wilful one, dost seem deter-  
mined,

Though trebly warned, to snatch from out her  
hand.

Know, then, O goddess, that thy very pride  
Doth prove thee lacking in divinity.

Moreover, that through me and me alone  
Canst thou become in everything divine."

## SELÉNÉ

Whereat proud Artemis, wrath conquering awe:  
"Blasphemer, doubly blasphemous since thou,  
Even thou thyself, art numbered with the  
    gods.

What hath the Goddess of White Chastity  
To do with gorgeous Love? Thou wouldst not  
    dare

Such words to utter were not Phœbos sleep-  
    ing!"

But Eros, grown more kinglike as to mien,  
From lips disdainful sped his arrowy words:  
"Chastity is not abstinence, but temperance.  
True Chastity is truer for true love.  
Negative purity white pebbles have,  
Being cold and white, even as thou art, Seléné,  
Who art not chaste because of conquered fire,  
But merely chill, bearing a heart unkindled."

Then Artemis, more lurid pale with anger  
Than snow-fields by the glare of lightning flashed  
Against an ebon sky, caught up her bow,  
And towards the quiet god eager advanced.  
But scarce three onward paces had she ta'en  
When Eros, reaching out one delicate arm,  
All listlessly as though to bend a flower

## SELÉNÉ

Drooping too near his eyes, said, "Come no nearer."

And lo! those glittering feet that tread the sky

As 'twere a turquoise pavement, to the earth  
Straightway were fixed; nor could she wield her bow,

But like as when great Héré's arms were bound  
By wrathful Zeus in chains of gold, so now  
Seléné's arms in viewless chains were fettered.

Then Love, with solemn eyes grown pitiful,  
Spake low, in tones more haunting sad and sweet

Than those by wings of sea-birds desolate,  
Soft smitten from a long-unfingered lyre,  
Whose silver cords, rusted by many a tear,  
By many a kiss made warm, ere rain and sun  
Had all their will of them, still dimly shine  
Above the altar of a ruined temple  
Unto whose horns the sliny sea-weed clings  
Where once hung wreaths of roses red and white,

Such as by Aphrodité are beloved: .

"Pardon, O goddess, since I thus have bound thee,

## SELÉNÉ

That in the end full freedom may be thine,  
Unto my words attending, which if heard not,  
Thou, uninformed, dire thralldom mayst bring  
down

Upon thy radiant head. Give ear, Seléné,  
And let thy heart, too, listen, for I purpose  
To teach thee somewhat of my real nature,  
Which unto mortals—ay, and unto gods—  
Is little known. Nor let thy proud soul smile  
When I inform thee, Artemis, that thou  
No higher honourest, no more desirest  
Immaculate and immortal chastity  
Than doth the God of Love. Ay, though thou  
scoffest,

Am I the only god in whom vain man  
Seeth the reflex of himself? Thou, Dian,  
Are there not countries where to thee, blood-  
hating,

Mankind their fellow-men do offer up,  
Thinking by acts of slaughter all abhorrent,  
And murder's crimson reek, hot-smoking, thee,  
Goddess of chilly flame and infinite whiteness,  
Thus to propitiate? By titles false  
Art thou not also called, and as Brauronia  
Is not the tender flesh of Spartan boys  
Scourged in thy honour, till thy snowy altar

## SELÉNÉ

Shines red withal as Aphrodité's lips?  
Still more, in Ephesus, what rites are thine,  
What form revolting, what poor maimed priests!  
And sayest thou, then, gods may not be traduced  
Even by the very piety of their worshippers?  
Alas! not so, and I of all Olympos  
By names most various and most false am hailed:  
For now they call me son of Pandemea,  
And now Urania's offspring; now as Pothos  
I am invoked, and now as one with Himeros,  
Or as a child am coaxed by frivolous women,  
Or with lascivious orgies am approached,  
As I a greater Dionysos were,  
Of wine more heady and of nymphs more fair.  
But this the truth, awful, nor even by thee,  
O Artemis, lightly to be received.  
I am the mirror of the universe,  
Wherein or men or gods themselves behold.  
If heavenly their natures, then in me  
The essence of the heavenly they perceive,  
And as Urania's comrade give me worship;  
If, on the other hand, with eyeballs seared  
By fumes of earthly fire, they gaze on me,  
I, through that bickering and ensanguined flame,  
To them appear the Love common to all,  
Birds, beasts, and men; and, turning from the stars

## SELÉNÉ

Unto the sparks thrown off from hearts inflamed  
By the Pandemian Venus, me they worship  
As offspring of that earthly deity.

Thus fell poor Steropé, that hapless star,  
Twi-natured, for alternately she glowed  
With crimson rays of passion all too earthly,  
Or with the violet of celestial ardour;  
And loving thus, with double soul, a mortal,  
Him could not win to immortality,  
But fell herself, becoming less than mortal,  
Nor freeing from its sensual mesh his soul.  
Ay, thus she fell. But this her fault essential  
She doth impute to me, saying that in wrath  
I hurled her out of heaven; being ignorant  
That, save with their consent, not even Love  
May cast from heaven the souls that once have  
gained it;

Nor doth she dream, nor any, that mine eyes  
Oft burn with holy tears, watching the pangs  
Of those who worship me as Love Pandemos;  
Or that full many a time when Eros smiles  
His soul doth weep, or how through bitter ages  
He, pitiful—yea, very pitiful  
Of ignorant man—who fire prefers to light,  
To him doth ceaseless cry, in many a voice,  
By tongue of sea, and wind, and hymning sphere,



## SELÉNÉ

By sighs of great-souled women wed to those  
Who as a pastime look on married love,  
And with their bodies, not their spirits, worship;  
By groans of poets yoked to empty beauty,  
To women fair as flameless lamps are fair,  
Whose eyes unlighted by the soul within  
Gaze ever downward at the sea of passion,  
From out whose fiery spume leaped Aphrodité,  
Nor in that ever-troubled deep behold  
So much as the reflection of the heavens;  
By sobs of delicate maidens on whose breasts  
Desire's sweet rose is laid with all its thorns;  
By man's true self that pleads within his breast  
For holy temperance even in ecstasy.  
Yet, though not all in vain my voice is raised,  
Few, few there are who worship me aright.  
Those few alone know heavenly happiness,  
Pure treasure of the spirit-conquered being,  
Nor while on earth envy the placid gods.  
Thou canst not doubt me, Phœbé, since to thee,  
Scornful alike of me and of my power,  
I have revealed myself as unto none  
In heaven or earth; and for thy sake, O goddess.  
Know, then, that ere time was, or gods or men,  
It was decreed that thou shouldst feel my power.  
Unto this end thou, dauntless, didst defy

## SELÉNÉ

The Delphian Oracle, nor wouldst be warned,  
Even by me. Yet, knowing me, take comfort;  
My shafts, though keen, strike wisdom through  
the blood;

My wounds, though never healèd, heal the soul,  
By pride and scorn and self-devotion cankered.  
My service, worthily done, makes kings more  
kingly,

Freeth the souls of slaves, to gods adds god-  
head,

Yea, even thee, O daughter of great Zeus,  
Will render more divine."

Glowing, he paused,  
And fixed her, cold one, with his yearning eyes;  
But she, still haughty and with soul unmoved,  
Stood in the marvellous radiance of that look  
Like to a lovely form of ice that glitters  
Beneath the splendour of the morning star,  
Illumined, yet unmelted, thus replying:  
"Thou sayest, O god, ready in praise of self,  
That I am lacking in divinity,  
And save through thee can ne'er be all divine.  
Know this, that rather would I lose what now,  
According to thy words, is mine of godhead  
Than owe to thee a throne mightier than Héré's.

## SELÉNÉ

Dost thou in truth think me so ignorant  
Of all thy subtle wiles: thy quips, thy feignings,  
Thy labyrinths of specious, golden phrase,  
Thy glittering words that blind poor Reason's  
eyes,

Thy honeyed arguments, that, being placed  
Within the scales of Justice, clog the beam  
With very sweetness, till, although the cause  
Of thine opponent be in truth more weighty  
Than is the load of Atlas, yet to thee  
That trickèd beam will bow? Nay, well I know  
thee,

Better, by Zeus! than thou knowest me, for thus  
Did Hermes, supple-tongued and full of guile,  
Strive to deceive great Phœbos, who as little  
Him credited as Phœbé credits thee.

Yet, if perchance thou dost believe thy falsehood,  
And thinkest that I am doomed to feel thy power  
Beyond what now I feel, unloose mine arms,  
That thou mayst conquer worthily, nor smite  
Whom first by Moera's aid thou hast made  
helpless."

Then Eros gave a cry, exceeding bitter,  
As of a mighty soul misunderstood  
By one belovèd yet of lesser mould:

## SELÉNÉ

“Alas, Seléné! art thou so determined,  
In spite of all, to be mine enemy?  
Oh, chill of fancy! Wilt thou then refuse,  
So often warned, the blessing of my friendship?”

Whereat Seléné laughed, the ready laugh  
Of those unused to tears, with upward chin  
And eyes no whit less arrogant than before,  
To him thus answering: “Idly dost thou speak,  
For how should I from thee receive aught  
goodly,

Seeing that for me the oracle proclaims  
Whether I be or friend or foe of thine,  
Sorrow on sorrow, grief on grief up-piled?”

But ever-patient Love, her scorn unheeding:  
“And knowest thou not, O sister of Apollo,  
That in an oracle hide many meanings  
Of which but one is true? Once more attend  
While I expound to thee that prophecy  
By Themis uttered, lest in days to come  
Thou shouldst reproach me with my silence now.  
Behold the hidden meaning of her words:  
If thou my foe becomest, then, indeed,  
Sorrow will fall on thee and mortal pain,  
But pain bewildered, seeing not its aim;

## SELÉNÉ

Like as when one is wounded in the dark,  
And knoweth not which way to turn his feet,  
Lest on his enemy's spear he run again,  
Or into some deep precipice should stumble.  
If I become thy foe, still worse the anguish,  
For then, Seléné, thy defiant heart  
A loveless immortality must know—  
Yea, an eternity of lonely power,  
Majestic, glorious, barren as a sphere  
Of maiden ice with azure lightning zoned.  
Thou wilt remain the unfinished being thou art,  
Half goddess great, half woman undeveloped;  
A force incapable of creating joy  
For others or thyself; the frozen twin  
Of life-bestowing Phœbos; the one creature  
In heaven or earth in all or part divine,  
Ignorant of that mystery supreme  
Whereby thou wast thyself brought into being.  
If thou my friend becomest verily,  
Still woe on weary woe shall be thy portion,  
For terrible the ways, and stained with heart's  
    blood  
Of men, of gods, the ways devious and dark,  
That lead unto mine everlasting house,  
Set in a tideless sea of golden air,  
Amidst of gardens, wherein all may find

## SELÉNÉ

Their childhood dreams made real, and, looking  
back,

Rejoice, since grief endured redoubles joy.  
Still woe, I say, shall be thy portion then,  
But woe desired and sweet in bitterness,  
Like unto that of one who chooses rather  
To weep, at last, above the death-chilled form  
Of his beloved than never to have felt  
The warm lips warmer grow beneath his kiss,  
Or in the kindled eyes ne'er to have bathed,  
As in a holy fire, his eager soul,  
Now so bereft of all but true bereavement.  
This if thou art my friend, O Cynthia.  
But lo! if in return I do become  
Thy friend, thy guide, thy comrade freely chosen,  
Then, Artemis, thou shalt a throne possess  
Greater by far than Héré's chair of gold;  
A kingdom such as Zeus hath never swayed;  
A height of vast, immaculate repose,  
Wherefrom Olympos, viewed, will seem a mound  
Of marble-dust by children heaped in play.  
Then shalt thou feel the full divinity  
Which now thou dost declare to be thine own;  
Then shalt thou wear true chastity, that jewel  
Found in the core of hearts by me ignited  
And purified, not scorched by their own flames,

## SELÉNÉ

Forever unconsumed, forever burning.  
Nor fear to be my friend, since thou in me  
Wilt find the true reflection of thyself.”  
Again he paused, while o’er his face there stole  
A look of wistful majesty, supreme  
In pathos, like as though a mighty king,  
Loving of heart and yet by none beloved,  
Should sue, with anxious eyes and crown extended,  
A little arrogant child for some small sign  
Of recognition. But the goddess smiled  
The maddening smile of self-sure maidenhood,  
And thus replied: “For thy much speaking,  
Eros,  
I, spoken to, my earnest thanks extend thee.  
Loose now mine arms, I pray thee, Orator,  
That I yet more may thank thee for a deed  
Of generosity in generous silence done.”

Whereat the god said, softly: “Be thou loosed.”  
And Artemis, exultant, from her quiver  
Caught up a fateful shaft, thus fierce exclaiming:  
“If, as thou sayest, I am but half divine,  
This arrow given me by my father Zeus,  
By him made irresistible, will free me—

## SELÉNÉ

Ay, thou most soft of voice and hard of heart,  
From thee a refuge will procure for me,  
Even in the halls of Hades." Crying thus,  
Deep in her frost-bright breast the shaft she  
plunged.

As when a delicate winter-laden tree,  
Beneath the first faint roseate glow of dawn,  
Doth seem once more its April bloom to wear,  
So Artemis, beneath that wrathful stroke.  
For lo! a tender crimson, not of blood,  
Floated aerial e'er her piercèd breast,  
O'er brow and cheek and throat, crept wavering,  
Till like a flame within a shell of ice  
Scarlet her crescent flashed. She waned, she  
glowed,  
She trembled, not as one by arrow smitten,  
But like unto a shaft itself, quick quivering  
Within a stalwart oak, more hurt than hurting.  
Yea, even so she shivered, while with fear  
Her bright hair rose about her haughty head  
As 'twere a gilded smoke up-shimmering;  
And all her face waxed keen with novel dread,  
And thin her nostrils grew, and parched her  
lips,  
And at her feet clanged down her glinting bow;



## SELÉNÉ

And her dear moon changed with her, till that  
men,

Beholding o'er the violet rim of the sea  
Its coral-coloured orb in splendour drifting,  
Deemed it a ship on fire.

Then loud she cried  
In voice soul-freezing, of divinity  
By fate o'erta'en, that voice which makes de-  
spair  
Of lesser beings seem hope: "Woe! Woe is me!  
I change. I am no longer Artemis.  
Unto myself I am become a stranger;  
I feel no more as I have felt. O Zeus,  
Is this, then, death? Was I but half divine?  
Alas! Alas! What fearful shafts are mine!  
Flame mixes with my blood, and past my ears  
I hear it hiss. My breast is full of fire.  
Even thee, O thou revengeful, even thee  
Only as burning mist I do behold.  
Yea, surely this is death, for all my soul  
Grows liquid, flowing forth, I know not how,  
Unto some mystic depth, I know not what,  
Like as a river maddeth to the sea.  
Father, I die. Snap thou my bow in twain,  
That weaker hands may not profane its might;

## SELÉNÉ

And this proud arrow which hath drunk my  
greatness,

Oh, pierce with it the cruel breast of Eros,  
That never more may he with venom'd shafts  
Corrode the hearts to peace and chasteness  
vowed.

Yea, Artemis is dying, glad to die,  
Since life had meant a servitude to Love.  
Now do I comprehend why noble beings  
The silence of Death's gloomy halls prefer  
Unto the prison-palace reared by Life—  
Darkness in freedom unto light in chains.  
O Death, whose secret name is Liberty,  
Better it were to have thee for a friend,  
To range thy starless realm possessed of naught  
Beside a soul untrammelled and at ease,  
Than rule in fetters on the throne of Heaven.  
And yet—can this be death? O sweet, sweet,  
sweet!—

O fiery sweet!—O sweet beyond all sweetness!—  
O immortality, well art thou lost  
If this indeed be death. Again! Again!  
Exquisite thirst consumes me! Ah! I burn!  
One draught before I die — one deep, deep  
draught!

One draught of Love, O Death, before I die!"

## SELÉNÉ

"Drink," said a solemn voice. "The hour is here.  
Drink of the cup that thou wast born to drink of,  
O Artemis, the cup of love and fate."

Then quick wheeled Artemis, as oft had wheeled,  
By her keen shaft transfixed, some throbbing  
doe,

And lo! a shadow huge with eyes of light  
And outline feminine, to her extending  
A goblet dark wherein there seemed to whirl  
A clear, black flame with ruby sparkles rayed.  
And once again the implacable voice said,  
"Drink."

Then Artemis, unarmed, sore-smitten, trembling:  
"O awful shape, who art thou? Art thou Death?"

But that murk form, the cup still holding forth:  
"I am the third in that triumvirate  
Which rules the universe — Love, Death, and  
Fate.

Moera my name, and this thy destined cup.  
Nor canst thou choose but drink, O Artemis,  
For lo! the arrow that hath pierced thy heart  
No arrow was of thine, but one by me  
From out Love's quiver drawn, and thence to  
thine,

## SELÉNĒ

Unseen of thee, transferred. Quenchless the  
thirst

It hath enkindled in thy seething veins  
Save by this potent drink I proffer thee,  
Which, though thou shouldst refuse ten thousand  
times,

At last, O arrogant one, upon thy knees  
Thou'lt sue me to bestow, so fierce the craving,  
So all unconquerable the desire  
Of those whom Eros wounds, for Fate's black  
wine."

Then Artemis, defiant to the end,  
Shaped her proud mouth to fit a mocking laugh,  
But there did issue forth instead a groan,  
Terrible as of those in Tauris slain  
Upon her altars, while from wood and glen  
There rang a chuckling sound like to the noise  
By satyrs made, when, from a leafy covert  
Peering, they note some flying dryad fall—  
Harsh, clattering notes of vulgar mirth tri-  
umphant,

Like clack of waves beneath a hollow rock.  
Again she strove to laugh, again she groaned.  
Seizing her tender breast with furious hands,  
As though to tear away the kindled heart  
That shot such light of frenzy to her eyes,

## SELÉNÉ

Those eyes of Dian, erstwhile calm and clear  
As ice reflecting back a twilit heaven.  
Nor knew she what she felt, nor that herself  
Had cried aloud to drink, ere death, of love,  
So wrought that fire immortal in her veins,  
With madness filling her and with desire  
For what she knew not, save that 'twas desired  
Above all things familiar and possessed.  
And, feeling more and more that savage thirst  
Wring her proud veins, she, turning suddenly  
From Moëra's hand, did smite the fateful cup.  
But lo! a miracle—for on the ground  
Flowed not the darkling flame, nor was the cup  
Against the jagged rock to fragments dashed,  
But in the air it floated till its rim  
Pressed close the haughty lips of Artemis,  
Whose every pulse seemed shrieking, "Drink!  
Drink! Drink!"

And once again that awful one said, "Drink!"  
And then the voice of Eros murmured, "Drink,"  
But softly, as a mother to her babe  
When from the brimming breast it turns away  
By very thirst confused—softness divine  
That when Seléné heard, anew she trembled,  
But this time not with fear or wrath. "O  
Love,"

## SELÉNÉ

Thus from her heart burst forth the new-born  
fire—

“O Love, if I have wronged thee, pardon me;  
I know not where I am or who, in truth—  
Meseems I am a sleep-bewildered dryad,  
Who dreamed that she was mighty Artemis.”  
And through the only tears she e’er had known,  
Pathetic in her new timidity  
As is a bride in bridal freshness clad,  
She wistful gazed about in search of Eros.  
Alas! she saw him not as formerly,  
In full effulgence, for between them rose  
That grisly shape; but through its essence thin  
His glory shone in tempered loveliness,  
As through a shadowed sail the silver moon.  
And thus to her his words came, clear and sweet,  
Like sound from bells afloat on southern seas:

“Take heart, O lovely one, of very fear,  
Of very pain take heart to be thyself;  
Not as thou wert indeed, for nevermore  
Canst thou return unto thy former being;  
Nor weep for grief, but rather for delight,  
Since after thou hast drunk the cup of Fate  
More Artemis thou’lt be in every wise  
Than e’er thou wast before. Who from that cup

## SELÉNÉ

Unflinching quaffs the dark and burning wine  
True godhead knows; knows good and evil;  
knows

To choose between them, and, though agony  
Should be the crown that nobleness must wear,  
Sublimely sets its thorns upon his brow.  
Nor in the majesty of highest being  
Regrets the glow of happiness foregone.  
Drink, then, O Artemis, and be thyself  
Unto the full ideal of what thou wert  
And yet couldst ne'er have been till of this cup  
Thy mighty spirit had partaken. Drink,  
In willing calmness, for of Mœra's wine  
Both gods and men must drink, or soon or late.  
Two ways alone there are to taste of it:  
The one in dignity of free compliance;  
The other when, within her mighty grasp,  
No choice remains but that of forced submission."

Then Artemis, a wonder to herself,  
Reached up her slender hands and took the cup,  
The heavy cup that bends the wrists of gods,  
With proud obedience, him thus answering:  
"Still of my former self enough remains  
To let me from this baleful chalice drink  
Serene of brow as when on hunting-days

## SELÉNÉ

From leafy springs the crystal gush I quaffed.  
Nor do I hesitate from dread, O Eros,  
But that I first may learn if thou forgivest  
Her who was Artemis, who is thy friend?"

EROS: Thou wast forgiven ere thou askedst forgiveness;  
But ah, too late, too late thy proffered friendship  
To save thee from the woe thy scorn hath wrought.

SELÉNÉ: Alas! wilt thou mine enemy become?

EROS: Nay, Artemis, thy friend, as thou art mine.

SELÉNÉ: Why, then, didst thou exclaim, "Too late! Too late!"?

MÆRA: Those who have scoffed at Eros and refused  
With scorn his friendship must of me be taught  
Ere in full glory they again behold him.

SELÉNÉ: Ah, woe is me, oft warned in vain, in vain!



SELÉNÉ

EROS: Yet be not all despairing, sith from grief  
Of noble hearts sweet gladness often wells  
As fresh spring-water from the bitter sea.  
Endure, achieve, resign. Whom I befriend  
Are by all gods befriended at the last.

SELÉNÉ: Ah, could I look on thee but once  
again  
Ere of this bitter cup I drink, O Love!  
Already dim the memory of thy smile.

MÆRA: O hard to learn! How long wilt thou  
delay?  
Mine now to teach thee, who Love's lesson scorned,  
Long, long ere thou mayst look on him again.

SELÉNÉ: Libation I may pour him from this  
cup?

MÆRA: Not so, for thou must drain it every  
drop.

SELÉNÉ: First let me grasp my well-loved bow  
again  
And stroke the wistful foreheads of my hounds.  
Farewell, farewell, ye clear of eye and heart;

## SELÉNÉ

I know not if again in eager chase  
Together we may rouse the sacred deer;  
No, nor if I, your clanging notes pursuing,  
May follow through the coppice sweet with dew  
Where shattered trails of blooming eglantine,  
Torn by your spiked belts, enmesh the way.  
But this I know, that ye have served me well,  
Therefore, O friends, O long - tried, trusted  
    friends,  
Though nevermore ye, twain with Artemis,  
May scud the well-loved mountains of Arcadia,  
Yet where her throne is ye shall also be,  
And shine among the brightest ones in heaven.

MÆRA: Delay no longer — almost gone thine  
    hour.

SELÉNÉ: Alas, poor Steropé! Mother, alas!  
And thou, O Phœbos, dear, well art thou sleeping;  
May no sad dreams of Phœbé mar thy rest!  
O grewsome cup, how worn by softest lips  
Thine adamantine brim. Idalia's self  
Hath not so oft been kissed, nor by such lovers.  
Here brushed the beard of great Prometheus;  
The curls of Adonais floated here;  
Mighty Achilles here did bend his crest.

## SELÉNÉ

Thou knewest the mouth of sweet Persephoné,  
Of piteous Io, of Callisto frail;  
Poor Clyté pressed against thy cruel lips  
The lips whereof Apollo would not taste.  
The first god drank of thee as must the last,  
As doth Seléné.

Speaking thus she quaffed,  
Ay, to the lees, that dark and bickering wine.  
As when upon a lustrous night in June  
A windy cloud the crystal moon obscures,  
Turning the silver waters into lead  
And breathing dimness o'er the golden wheat,  
Even so before the eyes of Artemis  
Thin darkness wavered, while within her soul,  
As through the caves of Sleep, a twilight spread,  
Dulling the precious gold of memory,  
And bitterly she cried: "Ah, woe on woe!  
Desire in blindness, blindness in desire.  
A mighty hand there is upon my heart-strings,  
And I must follow, even as the bow  
Follows the mastered cord. Yet where to turn?  
For all was I prepared but utter darkness.  
Phœbos, O Phœbos! lend me of thy light,  
Of thy magnificence, but one small ray—  
I can bear all but darkness. Phœbos, hear!"

## SELÉNĒ

Then, suddenly, o'er sea and land there burst  
A splendour, such as light-crowned Artemis  
Had ne'er imagined, while the voice of Love,  
He being still invisible, rang forth:  
"My torch shall light thee to thy heart's desire,  
O Artemis. Fear not, but follow on  
To where thine eager soul hath leaped before."

But she, bewildered: "All is changed, is changed.  
This mountain know I not, this shore, this  
wood—

All, all are unfamiliar to mine eyes,  
Which have beheld, alas! or so I thought,  
The fairest corners of this fairest earth.  
Yet so ineffable this loveliness,  
Perchance I dreamed of earth and wake in  
heaven."

MÆRA: Away! Thy fate is on thee—past the  
hour.

SELÉNĒ: Ai me! Who draweth me? I come!  
I come!

O pain delicious! O mysterious longing!  
O hunger fierce, divine, as of a god  
Fire-born, for fire! Endymion, I come!

## SELÉNÉ

### CHORUS OF DRYADS AND HAMADRYADS

#### STROPHE

##### I

Who fareth so fleetly  
In silver apparel  
And aureate glimmer  
Of wind-shaken tresses,  
With quiver all empty  
And bow-string unloosened?  
Like Phœbé's the jewel  
Alight on her forehead,  
But lurid in colour,  
Unmeet for the goddess.

##### II

We saw not before her  
The sacred deer flying—  
The gold of the antlers,  
The collars of beryl,  
The hounds with their baying,  
The rosy-kneed maidens;  
Yet brighter than mortals'  
Her crystalline sandals,  
Nor freer, diviner,  
The gait of the goddess.

# SELÉNÉ

## ANTISTROPHE

### I

What frenzy of beauty!—  
Still beauty, though maddened!  
What virginal pallor!  
What passion ecstatic!  
Thus fled our Seléné  
The river-god's kisses;  
Thus Daphné the ardour  
Of golden Apollo;  
A lily thus gleameth  
Whirled on by the tempest.

### II

Lo! nearer and nearer,  
With quick-throbbing raiment  
And hiss of long tresses,  
The bright one approacheth.  
Alas! she hath veiled  
Her delicate splendour.  
Yet hearken, my sisters,  
Though lonely and troubled,  
A goddess I deem her.  
O come! Let us follow!

## SELÉNÉ

### SELÉNÉ

I am snow! I am fire!  
The bird and its singing,  
The wind and the myrtle  
It rocks on its bosom!  
The deer and the arrow,  
The wave and the swimmer,  
Delight and desire,  
The wine-cup, the mænad!

### CHORUS

#### STROPHE

##### I

Oh, follow her, follow!  
More sweetly she lilteth  
Than young Dionysos;  
Or were she his sister,  
Thus, thus would she carol!  
Had flowers but voices,  
Meseemeth, O sisters,  
A moon-coloured poppy  
Would sing as she singeth.  
Then follow! Then follow!

## SELÉNÉ

### II

What free exultation!  
What triumph in being!  
Thus sang Cytherea,  
Still bright with the ocean,  
While round her the pigeons,  
Like delicate foam-wreaths,  
Streamed white in the starshine;  
And deep-coloured flowers  
Unfurled in her footsteps;  
As softlier shining  
Than roses through water,  
And lighter than rose-leaves  
On breezes upfloating  
She came from the sea-shore.

### ANTISTROPHE

#### I

Persephoné sang thus  
When first from the darkness,  
Her bright head uplifting,  
She saw as aforetime  
The April-hued valley,  
The cloud-whitened water,  
The fatal, sweet blossoms.



## SELÉNÉ

### II

And thus sang Demeter,  
When, weary with praying,  
From eyelids long tearless  
She looked and beheld her,  
The long-lost, the buried,  
In all ways unaltered,  
With Hermes approaching!

### SELÉNÉ

As the light to the opal,  
The bee to the blossom,  
The wave to the mainland,  
So I to my rapture!

### CHORUS

Oh, follow her, follow!

### SELÉNÉ

Thou breath of the forest,  
Deep, deep I inhale thee;  
Like breath of a lover  
Thou makest me tremble.  
O Pan! Art thou near me?

## SELÉNÉ

### CHORUS

We follow! We follow!  
O Pan, be thou near us!

### SELÉNÉ

Thou lyrical water,  
More sweetly thou stealest  
Athrough the dim covert  
Than into a day-dream  
The song of a throstle!  
What name dost thou murmur?—  
What message enchanting?  
“Oh, hasten, belovèd!”  
Thou seemest to whisper;  
“I weary of dreaming  
And fain would behold thee!”  
Ah, Hermes, thou fleet one,  
My bow for thy sandals!

### CHORUS

O ecstasy tender!  
O passionate yearning!  
Ariadne thus singeth,  
When, winter well over,

## SELÉNÉ

The first golden crocus  
With rapture recalleth  
The curls of Iacchos.

## SELÉNÉ

I am sunlight and moonlight,  
The fire in the jewel,  
The blue in the blossom,  
The dew on its petals,  
The pearl and the ocean,  
The pang and the pleasure,  
The gift and the giver,  
The prayer and its answer—  
Immortal and mortal!

## CHORUS

How golden the lyric  
When sings an Immortal  
In words the divinest  
What long we have treasured  
Unvoiced in our bosoms!  
Oh, follow her, follow!

THE END





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